

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
USINT HAVANA

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 2561

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, JM
SUBJECT: PNP MODERATES GAIN FURTHER STRENGTH AT "RESUMED" ANNUAL
CONFERENCE

REFERENCE: KINGSTON 2382

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: THE MODERATE FACTION OF THE RULING
PEOPLE'S NATIONAL PARTY (PNP) APPEARS TO HAVE DEMONSTRATED
ENHANCED STRENGTH AT THE PARTY'S "RESUMED" ANNUAL CONFERENCE,
HELD ON MARCH 4-5 AT THE NATIONAL ARENA IN KINGSTON..
AS A RESULT, THERE IS AN INCREASED LIKELIHOOD THAT SOME
WITHIN THE RADICAL GROUP MAY LEAVE THE PARTY BEFORE THE
YEAR'S END. A SHOWDOWN, IF IT COMES, COULD OCCUR AT NEXT
SEPTEMBER'S 40TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE PNP. END SUMMARY.

2. THE PNP'S "RESUMED CONFERENCE APPEARED TO PASS QUIETLY
INSOFAR AS THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS WERE CONCERNED.
HOWEVER, WE HAVE BEEN TOLD BY PARTICIPANTS THAT IT WAS
MARKED BY SHARP CONTROVERSY, AND ON OCCASION APPROACHED
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THE BOISTEROUSNESS OF LAST SEPTEMBER'S CONFERENCE,
WHEN DIFFERENCES FORCED THE ADJOURNMENT UNTIL THE MARCH
4-5 SESSION (SEE 77 KINGSTON 5467). ACCORDING TO OUR
SOURCES, THE INCLUSION IN THE "RESUMED" CONFERENCE'S FINAL
RESOLUTION OF A CALL TO DISCIPLINE AND UNITY (SEE REFTEL)
WAS A DIRECT RESULT OF THE UPROARIOUS ATMOSPHERE AT THE
MEETING.

3. THE TENSION WHICH MARKED THE MARCH 4-5 SESSION DID NOT ARISE OUT OF THE VICE-PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. AS ANTICIPATED, PRIME MINISTER MICHAEL MANLEY, IN HIS CAPACITY OF PNP PRESIDENT, CALLED FOR A SIMPLE EXTENSION OF THE TERM OF OFFICE OF THE PARTY'S FOUR VICE-PRESIDENTS, ARGUING THAT THERE WOULD BE LITTLE PURPOSE SERVED BY GOING THROUGH A POSSIBLE DIVISIVE ELECTION WHEN THE NEW VICE-PRESIDENTS WOULD SERVE ONLY FOR SIX MONTHS. HIS PROPOSAL PASSED WITHOUT ANY DIFFICULTY. RATHER, TROUBLE AROSE WHEN PAUL BURKE, WHO FOUR DAYS EARLIER HAD BEEN SUSPENDED FROM THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE PNP YOUTH ORGANIZATION BY THE PNP EXECUTIVE, SOUGHT TO HAVE THE DECISION OVERTURNED.. THE PARTY'S EXECUTIVE AGREED THAT THE CONFERENCE SHOULD REVIEW THE SUSPENSION SINCE THE PARTY IN CONFERENCE IS THE PNP'S MOST REPRESENTATIVE BODY.

4. BURKE'S POSITION -- WHICH WAS EQUALLY THAT OF THE PNP YOUTH ORGANIZATION'S "POLITBURO", AS IT STYLES ITSELF -- WAS SET FORTH BY DR. D.K. DUNCAN, THE FORMER GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE PNP, MINISTER OF MOBILIZATION BETWEEN JANUARY AND SEPTEMBER, 1977, AND PERHAPS THE MOST PROMINENT OF THE PNP RADICALS. DUNCAN'S PRESENTATION OF BURKE'S CASE APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN PEJORATIVE OF THE EXECUTIVE, AND THE DEBATE ON BURKE'S ACTIONS AND THOSE OF THE PNP YOUTH ORGANIZATION POLITBURO THREATENED AT TIMES TO DESCEND INTO CHAOS AS INSULTS AND THREATS

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WERE EXCHANGED BETWEEN PARTISANS OF THE PARTY'S FACTIONS, WHETHER DELEGATES OR OBSERVERS. IN THE END, THE DECISION TO SUSPEND BURKE WAS UPHELD BY A VOTE OF 411 TO 154.

5. MODERATES ASSURE US THAT THE VOTE WAS A CLEAR VICTORY FOR THEIR FACTION, NOTWITHSTANDING THE FACT THAT BURKE RECEIVED NEARLY 28 PERCENT OF THE VOTES CAST. THESE MODERATES CONTEND THAT THE VOTE UPHOLDING BURKE'S SUSPENSION WAS SMALLER THAN IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN. MANY MODERATE DELEGATES DID NOT ATTEND THE CONFERENCE, DEEMING IT TOO COSTLY TO DO, ESPECIALLY SINCE POSTPONEMENT OF THE VICE-PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS WAS ANTICIPATED. OTHER MODERATES WHO ATTENDED THE CONFERENCE LEFT THE ARENA AS SOON AS THE DECISION TO POSTPONE THE ELECTIONS WAS TAKEN. ON THE OTHER HAND, MANY OF THOSE CASTING VOTES SUPPORTING BURKE'S REINSTATEMENT WERE NOT ACTUALLY DELEGATES (AND THUS ENTITLED TO VOTE) BUT WERE OBSERVERS WHO, AS THE VOTE APPROACHED, SLIPPED INTO THE SEATS OF DELEGATES AND CAST VOTES.

6. THE PNP EXECUTIVE HAS REPORTEDLY SUMMONED THE PNP YOUTH ORGANIZATION POLITBURO TO MEET WITH IT TODAY (MARCH 13). WE ARE TOLD THAT THE MEETING WILL BE A SHOWDOWN WITH THE YOUTH

ORGANIZATION AND COULD RESULT IN AN OPEN SPLIT BETWEEN THE PNPyO AND THE PARENT PARTY. IF A SPLIT SHOULD OCCUR, ONE MODERATE MINISTER SAID THAT IT COULD WELL BE THE PRELUDE TO A WITHDRAWAL FROM THE PNP OF MANY OF THE PARTY'S RADICALS. THIS WOULD NOT TAKE PLACE IMMEDIATELY, HOWEVER, BUT RATHER WILL TAKE PLACE AT OR AFTER NEXT SEPTEMBER'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE WHEN THE PNP WILL CELEBRATE ITS FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY. THE OCCASION FOR MODERATE-RADICAL CONFRONTATION IS EXPECTED TO BE -- ONCE AGAIN -- THE CHOICE OF VICE-PRESIDENTS, AND WE ARE TOLD THAT D.K. DUNCAN TOLD THE "RESUMED" CONFERENCE IN UNEQUIVOCAL TERMS THAT HE HAS EVERY INTENTION OF CHALLENGING THE MODERATES. HAVING GOT THROUGH THE VOTE ON BURKE'S SUSPENSION AS HANDILY AS THEY DID, THE MODERATES VIEW DUNCAN'S WARNING

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WITH LESS APPREHENSION THAN WOULD HAVE BEEN THE CASE A YEAR AGO. HOWEVER, THEY SEE NO ROOM FOR COMPLACENCY, AND THE BATTLE FOR DELEGATES WILL BEGIN FAR EARLIER AND WILL BE FAR MORE INTENSE. THE MINISTER SAID, "THIS TIME WE ARE GOING INTO THE CONSTITUENCIES OF DUNCAN, (HOUSING MINISTER TONY) SPAULDING, AND (YOUTH AND SPORTS MINISTER HUGH) SMALL." IF THEY ARE BEATEN AGAIN, MANY WILL LEAVE THE PNP, HE SAID. ASKED WHERE THEY WILL GO, HE SAID, "THEY WILL ALIGN THEMSELVES WITH TREVOR MUNROE."

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